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THE EVOLUTION OF CATTLE RAISING IN SOUTHERN ITALY BY MEANS OF THE ASSERTION OF RACES PRODUCING HIGHER YIELDS

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Research Institute, Rome

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SUMMARY

Land reform and the intensification of agriculture in Southern Italy, together with economic and social development, coupled with the progressive increase of consumption and the marked improvement of the average standard of living, have, during the last few decades, called for a major re-orientation of cattle raising in the areas concerned.

In these areas, cattle and races coming for the greater part from Podolic stock (continental Italy), and other races indigenous to the (Italian) islands, were traditionally raised. From a functional point of view, both may be considered as races of triple aptitude, though generally of a low degree of productivity, even if having constitutional characteristics quite in keeping with their main surroundings, based on large-scale agriculture, the utilisation of lowland and mountain pastures, and cattle raising subject to a bare minimum of supervision.

During the first few decades of the last century, races with a higher rate of milk yield were introduced into the restricted areas in which there was a traditional dairy industry. Nevertheless, the initial results were not very satisfactory, and could even be described as uncertain or downright negative, as a result of the fact that no preliminary steps had been taken to modify substantially the traditional environment of farming.

On the other hand, the work of land improvement and settlement (neglected during the last few decades) created (in only a brief spell of time) the premises for the development in very large areas of pilot schemes with a remarkable degree of specialisation, and which were consequently in a position successfully to introduce the races mentioned.

During this period, the Brown Alpine race was introduced to a considerable extent and (in limited areas and special farms) the Italian Friesian race, with good results from the point of view of an increased milk yield, with excellent results as regards the capacity of the races mentioned to adapt themselves to the conditions of the southern habitat, and the possibility of setting up farms for the purpose of carrying out in an organised manner the selection of the new national heritage of cattle.

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